Your Water Comes From Lake Travis!
Those who know the source of their drinking water use it more wisely

It may surprise you to know that almost 40 percent of District 17 customers surveyed were not aware that Lake Travis is the source of their drinking water, but that’s what our latest customer survey indicated. Why is this important? Because studies show that if you know the source of your water, you’re twice as likely to conserve it.

If you’ve seen the lake lately, you know that the “Sometimes Islands” that appear when lake levels drop are already prominent in the main basin, and the long sand bars that extend outward from Travis Landing are getting bigger every day. The hot, dry Central Texas weather is taking its toll on the lake, and the forecast doesn’t show any end in sight this summer.

In the last issue of The Waterline, we announced that the district adopted the watering schedule implemented by the City of Austin, which allows you to water your outdoor landscaping two days a week on the following days:

**Residential Schedule** (MANDATORY May 1st through September 30th for all single family homes, duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes):
- **Odd numbered addresses** may water on Wednesday and/or Saturday, while **even numbered addresses** may water on Thursday and/or Sunday.

**Commercial, Multifamily and HOAs** (MANDATORY all year round) may water on Tuesdays and/or Fridays only.

Automatic irrigation systems may be used before 10 a.m. or after 7 p.m. only. Watering with a handheld hose or bucket is allowed any time on any day.

Temporary variances may be allowed for new lawns. Customers who have installed special water-conserving irrigation control systems, such as those with weather station connections or moisture sensors, may be granted permanent variances to allow these systems to function as designed to water on any day.

Customers who do not adhere to this schedule may be fined.

If you have an automatic irrigation system, please set it to water on your designated days. With your help, we can work together to ensure that there is enough water to go around during the long, hot summer.
Recent District Survey Indicates High Customer Satisfaction

WCID 17 recently conducted a customer survey in an attempt to obtain feedback on various areas of our services, and we are happy to report that the results were extremely positive. Not only did a large number of you take the time to participate in the voluntary survey, but the responses showed that most district customers are pleased with our performance.

Of respondents who said they had visited the District 17 website, more than 72 percent said they were able to find the information they needed. With regard to the mandatory twice-a-week outdoor watering schedule, nearly 93 percent stated that they did not find the new rules to be an inconvenience, and that they were willing to follow the schedule in order to help manage water use during the hottest summer months (from May to September).

When asked about our performance in the areas of billing and customer service, the overwhelming majority of respondents who had used these services answered that they were very satisfied with our staff's courtesy and professionalism, response time, returning of phone calls and accuracy, with just two to three percent stating that they were not satisfied in these areas. Customers who have used our maintenance and repair services also gave us high ratings with regard to courtesy and professionalism, response time, quality of repairs, and cleanup and restoration, with only one to two percent stating that they were dissatisfied. We also rated a 93 percent satisfaction level with water service and quality, 89 percent satisfaction with providing you with water conservation information, and 80 percent satisfaction with regard to planning for future water needs (with almost 15 percent stating that they had not used this service).

Many of you indicated that you would be very interested or somewhat interested in the possibility of District 17 adding new paid services in the future, including year-round curbside recycling services for residences (arranged with a contracted recycling company), free or low cost mulch from wastewater sludge (similar to "Dillo Dirt"), free household water audits, and rebates for customers who purchase and install items such as low-flow toilets, high tech landscape irrigation controllers, and rainwater collection barrels.

We here at District 17 are very serious when it comes to customer satisfaction, and we’re delighted at the results of this survey. You can be assured that we will continue to listen to you in the future, and do our best to be responsive and innovative when it comes to your water needs. Thanks to everyone who took part in the survey!

District 17 Election Results

In the May 10th election, Jeff Roberts was re-elected to the District 17 Board of Directors and Jerri Lynn Ward was elected as a new member. Ms. Ward is an attorney with the law firm of Garlo Ward, P.C., and has been a resident of Hudson Bend for 15 years. We’d like to welcome Ms. Ward to the District 17 Board.

We’d also like to express our thanks to Mickey Decker for her two terms of service on the WCID 17 Board, during which she helped to oversee major developments in district facilities, water treatment capacity, and district-wide conservation efforts. We wish her well in the future, as she continues to pursue her many civic and business endeavors.

Gardening in the Hill Country

By Elizabeth Drozda-Freeman, LCRA Conservation Landscape Specialist

Summer arrived early this year in Central Texas. With several weeks of record-breaking heat already behind us and the specter of a long hot summer on the horizon, many of us are tempted to turn up the volume on our sprinkler systems.

At the same time, WCID 17 as well as the City of Austin and the Lower Colorado River Authority now have mandatory watering schedules that allow watering no more often than two days per week. The question on many minds is: “Will I be able to keep my yard alive watering just two days a week?”

The answer is YES.

Applying a half-inch of water to your landscape, twice a week, is enough to keep turf and landscape plants healthy. However, there are four things you can do to reduce the stress on your landscape even more during the heat of summer.

1) Be sure that your shrub, flower and vegetable beds are mulched. A two- to three-inch layer of mulch helps retain soil moisture and keeps soil cooler.

2) Water slowly. Many of us have tight clay soils. If your sprinklers apply water too quickly, or your yard is sloped, the water you apply may not be sinking into your soil. Slow the flow by using drip and soaker hoses wherever possible. If you have spray-type sprinkler heads, set your controller for multiple start times of shorter duration to allow water to penetrate the soil rather than run off.

3) Water during the required hours (7 p.m. to midnight and midnight to 10 a.m.). During this dark, less windy time period, evaporation is lowest. If you water during the heat of the day, up to 40 percent of the water you apply can be lost to evaporation.

4) Work on your soil. Soil is the sponge in the landscape capturing and holding the water that you apply. If your soil is very shallow or of poor quality, your landscape will dry out quickly. Consider topdressing lawns with a quarter inch of compost in spring and/or fall, and incorporating compost into flower and shrub beds.

Finally, if you do see your plants drooping a bit as the mercury passes 100 during the afternoon, don’t panic. Temporary drooping is a natural response of many plants to extreme heat. Dig a little at the base of the plant to see if the soil is moist. If you are following the twice per week watering schedule, chances are the plants have enough moisture and will perk up when the sun goes down. If you dig and find the soil is dry, consider the four tips above for a healthier, more drought-tolerant landscape.

For more information about watering schedules in and around Austin visit:


Visit Us on the Internet

We’ve added new features to the District 17 Website. Check us out at www.wcid17.org to find helpful information, new services and answers to frequently asked questions.
Join us for WaterFest 2008!

Saturday, August 16th, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

St. Luke’s on the Lake Episcopal Church Fellowship Hall
5600 Ranch Road 620 North

Water District 17 would like to invite all of our customers to the annual WaterFest event, which will be held Saturday, August 16, 2008, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at St. Luke’s on the Lake Episcopal Church in the Fellowship Hall. Admission is free to all customers of WCID 17.

Please join us for a complimentary bar-be-cue lunch, live music by the Matt Dunnam Band, children’s activities, snow cones and a drawing for valuable door prizes! We'll also have informative displays on the latest irrigation technology, rainwater collection, water-saving landscaping and products, pollution prevention, conservation and other topics.

LCRA’s Water IQ Team will be joining us again, and will offer a prize package worth over $200! Lake Travis Fire Rescue will also be returning this year with firefighters and a fire truck. We will have shuttles that will take customers to tour our water and wastewater treatment plants, and District 17 board members will be on hand for you to meet.

Last year, close to 1,000 people attended the event, and we are hoping for a great turnout again this year. As this issue of The Waterline goes to press, slated attendees include:

- LCRA’s Water IQ Team
- Lake Travis Fire Rescue
- Accord Irrigation Technologies
- Highland Lakes Group
- Rainfilters of Texas LLC
- AccuWater Irrigation Controllers
- The Hudson Bend Gardening Club
- Green Image of Austin (Hydretain Dealer)
- And displays sponsored by WCID 17

We’ll also have a moonwalk for the kids, and lots of giveaways in addition to the many door prizes.

Each year, WaterFest provides us here at District 17 with an opportunity to express our appreciation for our customers, and to share useful information on how to get the most out of your water. We hope to see you and your family there!
Meet the Staff:  
Mary Estrada, Billing Department

Mary has been a mainstay of the District 17 staff for the last eight years. Her 13 years of experience in every aspect of utility billing enable her to effectively assist customers and efficiently handle her many responsibilities. Every month, Mary processes and enters meter reading data, prepares and mails over 8000 utility bills, and processes orders for disconnections, reconnections and new service. She also helps maintain customer account files, reconciles billing activity, and generates work orders for field personnel. Mary is the first person many customers talk to when they call the district, and she handles a variety of matters from the technical to the routine. When she’s not at work, you can find Mary enjoying all kinds of outdoor activities, including gardening, barbecuing with family, hiking, swimming, and cycling.

WaterFest 2008
Saturday, August 16th
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Please join us for our annual WaterFest at St. Luke’s on the Lake Episcopal Church in the Fellowship Hall, 5600 Ranch Road 620 North. Enjoy free food, live music, snow cones, children activities and prizes, and learn about your water too! (See article on page 3)